E&A: Welcome to our show

E: About knowing nature through technology

A: Hosted by Andrea Jacobs and Elizabeth Gill

E: Often times the idea of technology is associated with progress, but sometimes as humans find solutions, more problems are created.

A: Today we will be addressing the question does technology bring us closer or farther from nature. The technologies we will be assessing are harming, controlling, and helping nature. We have guest speaker Professor Yu who is a biomedical engineer and his job is to correlate between medical devices and human physiological behaviors.

E: So Andrea, do you think that technology that harms nature bring us closer or farther from nature?

( Electronic beeping effects )

A: I think that they push us farther from nature. For example, with electronic waste issues, the people in the villages that take apart the worlds electronic wastes cannot see nature, because their environment is contaminated with piles of scraps and chemicals in their water. This completely coats the natural aspects of their environment. As the piles get bigger, people will further be detached from nature.

Hey, Professor Yu! Would you mind commenting on these electronics and these electronics and their effect on the environment?

Professor Yu: Uh, camera, all this kind of electronics gear you have a lot. And any of this if you don’t recycle it if you just throw it into a garbage can it’s very toxic, ok, a lot of heavy metal in there. So now-a-days you don’t just use that produce that we also need to find out if we don’t use, what should we do with that.
E: I totally agree with that. Electronic wastes contaminate nature, making it no longer pristine.

*(construction and office sound effects)*

I feel that construction also take us further away from nature. Because construction builds things such as buildings that people tend to stay in for long amounts of time; many people don’t actually experience nature anymore in these buildings.

A: Yeah, these ways definitely harm and remove humans from nature.

*(nuclear siren sound effect begins)*

That kind of reminds me of how nuclear energy takes us WAY farther from nature. What I mean by that is it pollutes the environment if released and it is not a natural aspect of nature.

*(nuclear explosion)*

E: Definitely! In 1986 nuclear energy really took us further from nature when the power plant in what was then, the Soviet Union was damaged and radiation was released, like you were just talking about Andrea. Because of this, many people died and the environment for miles around is permanently affected.

A: That’s awful, that’s just like fossil fuels and how they pollute the environment and prevent people from truly experiencing it. CO2 emissions are a huge problem associated with fossil fuels including fracking and drilling. This creates an unhealthy environment!

*(Mining sound effects)*

OH and with coal miners, they are in an unhealthy and dangerous environment as well, they’re below ground, and the miners don’t see the light of day let alone experience nature. Now professor Yu, I’m sure you have a specific view about fossil fuels. Would you care to share?

Professor Yu: Well fossil fuel now-a-days we can’t totally get rid of it. Right. We use it every day. Wherever you go, you do see that it’s necessary. But how to, to my view I feel that now-a-days I feel, no matter how soon we will use them out, ok, I want to reduce my own consumption. It’s not just reduce the pollution, but also, leave something for the next generation!

*(transition music “Working In A Coal Mine” by Devo)*

E: Okay so I definitely think we agree that technologies that harm nature takes us farther from it. But, what do you think of technologies that control nature, not like the normal physically controlling aspects like dams or roads; let’s address ways people don’t normally associate with controlling nature such as time, maps, and frames.

*(Clock ticking sound effect)*
A: Oh well time is universal and it imposes a mathematical system onto nature instead of natural patterns such as the sun. Removing us from these natural patterns, such as the sun, I feel that it takes us farther away from viewing nature, in my opinion.

(Sketching sound effect)

E: Oh yeah, daylight savings is definitely not natural. Other things that control nature are roads and maps. These impose a mathematical grid-like system on nature also which is really essentially curvy. This makes nature more synthetic, taking us further away from it.

(nature sounds start and CUT when Andrea says “not be able to hear”)

A: Speaking of further away from nature, to me nothing seems to remove us from nature more than frames from windows, cars, planes, anything. It’s such a tease to sit by a seemingly see through wall to the nature outside but not be able to hear, taste, touch, or smell it. It takes us far from nature, reducing it to just a blur or just a visual; we still can’t experience this. It’s so close, but yet, so far.

(transition music “Working In A Coal Mine” by Devo)

E: I see it that way too. Now, I think we have decided that both harming and controlling technologies take us farther from nature.

A: But what about technologies that help nature?

E: I think that these technologies bring society, as it is in the 21st Century, closer to nature.

(Wave sound effects)

A: Oh, I see what you’re saying! Like With solar, wind, and tidal energy, they’re all sustainable and actually use aspects of nature in a beneficial way. The sun, wind and water will never diminish their supply and are there to be used to help people in a non-parasitic way; it should be symbiotic! They don’t have CO2 emissions, or a carbon footprint! They’re a great way to harness nature with technology all while bringing us closer to it! Professor Yu, based on your profession I take it that you’re pretty familiar with alternative energy sources. I was wondering when the best time to use them would be.

Professor Yu: So the alternative energy is NOT one unique form; it depends on where you use that. And also, one way of alternative energy might be available sometimes, but not the other time.
E: That is great! Society today has created many issues for the environment, one of which is landfills. One of the problems with landfills is that they produce methane gas as the organic material decomposes. And the methane gas can be captured to prevent it from leaking into the environment and can be used as a source of energy.

(nature sound effects)

A: Wow! That’s so cool! It’s like turning something harmful into something helpful.

E: Yeah it is helpful! Something else that is helpful to turn something bad into something good is sustainable urban planning. This is creating shelter while reducing suburban sprawl caused by transportation and construction through consolidation. In Stockholm, Sweden, they have made plans to apply sustainable urban planning to that city. These are all technologies that help nature and therefore bring us closer to it. Professor Yu, could you please comment on the importance of helpful technologies?

Professor Yu: If we don’t promote this kind of technology, you’re not going to have any improvement, and you’ll just see, it just dies.

A: Thanks Professor Yu. Overall, it unfortunately seems that technology generally takes us further from nature. We should definitely focus on the ways of using technology to bring us closer to nature, and avoid the very harmful and controlling ones that take us farther away. As we discussed, there are definitely ways of nature that bring us closer. We live in the natural world, it wouldn’t make sense if we didn’t use the helpful, natural technologies to view and experience it for all its potential.

(Outro music “Working In A Coal Mine” by Devo)